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DIVINE MERCY AS A SIGN OF GOD'S ALMIGHTINESS

A b s t r a c t. Mercy has a special place and meaning in the Christian doctrine. It is connected with God's almightiness. In view of that mercy is not a display of weakness or powerlessness, but a demonstration of God's active and creative love.

God is almighty, he does as He pleases, according to the truth and justice, rules over everything according to His own will and nothing is too difficult for Him. However, the biggest display of this almightiness is forgiveness which touches the depths of sinner's heart. That is why God's almightiness does not limit human dignity nor freedom in any way, but protects human life and constitutes a foundation for man's rise from sin through gift of grace.

It defines proper Christian spirituality: personal experience of mercy, forgiveness of sins and forgiveness towards men, acceptance of the gift of indulgences and jubilee years. Performing works of mercy in imitation of God is as well of big importance.

Key words: mercy; God's almightiness; indulgences; spirituality of mercy.

“We need to constantly contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is a well-spring of joy, serenity, and peace. Our salvation depends on it.”¹ These words of Francis provoke spiritual activity and theological reflection on mer-

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¹ FRANCIS, Papal Bull *Misericordiae vultus* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Wrocławskiej Księgarni Archidiecezjalnej, 2015), no. 2. English translation by Vatican Publishing House [further: LEV].

cy. It is not about superficial understanding but about real contemplation which will have a real effect on the relationship between a person, God and other people.

The particular aspect of mercy which this article will be focused on is its being linked with God's almightiness. Mercy cannot be seen as an exhibit of weakness or powerlessness, but on the contrary—it seems to be a display of an active and creative love. It is the ultimate act “by which God comes to meet us [...]. Mercy: the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness.”² This is the witness born by the Bible, theology and the Church's and saints' experience.

Obviously, it is necessary to clarify all the notions first. And so, almightiness expresses the power of God that is linked with His love to the creatures, while His mercy is associated with forgiveness and compassion. In the Bible this reality is expressed by two words: *rahamim* and *hesed*. The first entails the image of maternal womb as a place where mercy is felt; it is connected with giving life and selflessness (heb. *rehem* — maternal womb), because that is the meaning of pardon, forgiveness and help. On the other hand, *hesed* underlines faithfulness, which is connected with an internal urge and not with just an impulse of kindness. It is also worth noting that these biblical terms are rendered as sensibility, pity, compassion, kindness, graciousness and clemency.³ It is linked with various aspects of love that includes human needs, misery, moral destitution, also in the context of wasting God's gifts.⁴ In no way is it against the great power of God.

² Ibid.

³ Jules CAMBIER and Xavier LÉON-DUFOUR, “Miłosierdzie” [Mercy], in *Słownik teologii biblijnej* [Dictionary of Biblical Theology], ed. Xavier Léon-Dufour, trans. Kazimierz Romaniuk (Poznań: Pallottinum, 1994), 479. Cf. Kazimierz MATWIEJUK, “Miłosierdzie Boże w liturgii i pobożności ludowej” [The Divine Mercy in the Liturgy and in Popular Piety], in *Oblicza miłosierdzia* [Aspects of Mercy], ed. Elżbieta Matulewicz (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo UKSW, 2010), 100–101.

⁴ Walerian SŁOMKA, “Miłosierdzie Boże” [The Divine Mercy], in *Leksykon duchowości katolickiej* [The Lexicon of Catholic Spirituality], ed. Marek Chmielewski (Lublin–Kraków: Wydawnictwo “M”, 2002), 522.

1. ALMIGHTINESS AND MERCY IN THE BIBLE AND TRADITION OF CHURCH

The Bible shows God as almighty and full of mercy for creatures, especially for humans. Importance of those traits is primarily shown by the word count.⁵ In the Polish translation of the Bible there are following terms describing God's almightiness: *wszechmoc* (occurs 3 times), *wszechwładza* (1 time), and *adj. wszechmocny* (62 times), *wszechmogący* (29 times), *wszechwładny* (7 times). Next, the noun *miłosierdzie* (mercy) occurs in the Bible 157 times, *łaska* (grace) 295 times, *łaskawość* (goodness) 78 times, *litość* (pity) 77 times. The adjective *miłosierny* (merciful) 37 times, *łaskawy* (kind) 45 times, *łagodny* (gentle) 22 times, *litościwy* (compassionate) 7 times. When we compare this to the words: *miłościwy* (merciful) 3 times, *miłość* (love) 206 times, *miłować* (cherish) 214 times, *miłujący* (cherishing) 13 times, it is easy to understand that love and mercy are the core of God and human life in His image, after His likeness. Most of all, the analysis of biblical message reveals the mystery of coexistence of almightiness and mercy in God. It must be intensified by testimony of faith of Church through the Tradition and the Magisterium.

a) *God Almighty*

God is almighty—"he does whatever he pleases" (Ps 115:3; cf. Job 42:2), gives His creation to anybody He pleases (Jer 27:5) and nothing is too difficult to Him (Jer 32:17). This truth is expressed by the names *Abram* which is translated as "Father (God) is exalted" and *Abraham*, which means "Father of multitude."⁶ The patriarch bearing these names was asked by an angel: "Is there anything too difficult for the Lord?" (Gen 18:14). God is almighty as he created whole world and from Him comes help for men (Ps 121:2). However, the particular display of this almightiness is forgiveness which

⁵ Cf. Jan FLIS, *Konkordancja Starego i Nowego Testamentu do Biblii Tysiąclecia* [Concordance for the Old and New Testament of the Millennium Bible] (Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza "Vacatio", 2000).

⁶ Komisja Teologiczno-Historyczna Wielkiego Jubileuszu Roku 2000 [The Theological—Historical Commission for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000], *Bóg, Ojciec miłosierdzia. Oficjalny dokument Papieskiego Komitetu Obchodów Wielkiego Jubileuszu Roku 2000* [God the Father of Mercy. An Official Document of the Pontifical Committee of Celebration of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000], trans. Stanisław Czerwik (Katowice: Księgarnia św. Jacka, 1998), 15. Translation own.

touches deeply the heart of a sinner. It is included in expressions such as: “Yet precisely because you can do all things, you show mercy to everyone” (Wis 11:23); “For as the skies are high above the earth, so his loyal love towers over his faithful followers” (Ps 103:11); “He is the one who forgives all your sins, who heals all your diseases, [...], who crowns you with his loyal love and compassion” (Ps 103:3.4b).

The Hebrew source of the expression of God’s almightiness is the phrase “Yahweh Sabaoth - the God of hosts” (2 Sam 5:10; 7:8), which in the Septuagint is conveyed as *Kyrios Pantokratôr* and as “God of Armies,” “God of Power,” “Lord of Power.” It signifies the idea of Lord of Heaven and Earth,⁷ who independently rules over everything.⁸ Also the term *El Shaddai* is translated as *Pantokratôr*. As follows, the verse Am 5:16 contains a phrase *Kyrios to Theos, ho Pantokratôr* (“Lord, God of host, Ruler of All”), which expresses the relation between God and the world, not only His being the highest. That is why the most proper translation of this Greek term is “Sustainer of the World.”⁹

Also the name JHWH (“I Am that I Am”) cannot be considered only in philosophical categories of constant presence. This basic name of God means His Almighty Providence. This interpretation is based on analysis of additional terms—the compassionate and gracious God; slow to anger, and abounding in loyal love and faithfulness (Ex 34, 6a).¹⁰

The New Testament shows God’s fatherhood and kindness even stronger. The most important are His relationship with Son of God and Universal Fatherhood of all creatures.¹¹ In this context the Gospel professes that “for

⁷ Joseph RATZINGER, *Wprowadzenie w chrześcijaństwo* [Introduction to Christianity], trans. Zofia Włodkowska (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 1996), 137.

⁸ Guy BAGNARD, “Bóg Ojciec w Objawieniu chrześcijańskim” [God the Father in the Christian Revelation], in *Tajemnica Trójcy Świętej* [The Mystery of the Holy Trinity], trans. Lucjan Balter, “Kolekcja Communio” [“Collection Communio”] 13 (Poznań: Pallottinum, 2000), 19.

⁹ Jean-Pierre BATUT, “Bóg Ojciec wszechmogący” [God the Father Almighty], trans. Lucjan Balter, *Communio* 19(1999), 2(110):44.

¹⁰ Therefore, while professing God the Father Almighty, we describe Him as almighty – “the One who creates everything, sustains everything, rules over everything and who has all power over world and its fate. Yet this good God Almighty is not a tyrant, but a good Father who [...] cares for man.” The German Bishops’ Conference, *Katolicki katechizm dorosłych: Wyznanie wiary Kościoła* [Adult Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church. The Creed of the Church], trans. Marek Węclawski (Poznań: Księgarnia św. Wojciecha, 1987), 71.

¹¹ Church Fathers emphasized God’s universal fatherhood in the following terms: *Father and Creator of whole world* (Clement of Rome), *Father and Lord of all things* (Justin), *Father of things visible and invisible* (Tatian). Bernard SESBOÛÉ, “Treść tradycji: reguła wiary i sym-

God nothing is impossible" (cf. Lk 1:37; Mt 19:26) and makes promises connected to man's act of faith, for instance: "Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours" (Mk 11:24) or "Don't be afraid, just believe!" (Mk 5:36b). Invocation of name Jesus brings radical changes in the lives of the sick (cf. Acts 3:16a). All of the passages reveal the trust in Jesus in which people had found the expression of God's almightiness. These signs also reveals the Christ as almighty Incarnate Word.

Also the tradition of the Church carries the message of God's almightiness as it is shown in the first Creeds. Following descriptions can be indicated: "In the Father, Ruler of all things" (*Epistula Apostolorum*, ca. 160-170); "I believe in one true God, the Father almighty" (*Constitution of the Egyptian Church*, ca. 500, coptic version); "I believe in One God the Father, Ruler of all things" (*Constitution of the Egyptian Church*, ca. 500, Ethiopian version); "Do you believe (I believe) in God the Father almighty" (Hippolytus of Rome, *Apostolic Tradition*; *Codex laudianus*; Ambrose's *Explanatio symboli*; Augustine's *Sermon 213* and *215*; Nicetas of Remesiana's *Exposition of the Creed*; *Antiphonary of Bangor*; *Gelasian Sacramentary*; Letter of Eusebius to the of people of his Diocese; Cyril of Jerusalem's *Catechetical Lectures VI-XVIII*; *Great Creed of the Armenian Church*; *Fides Damasi*) and "[I] believe, and am baptised into [...] the only true God Almighty, the Father of Christ" (*Apostolic Constitutions*, ca. 380).¹² Later decrees of the Magisterium of Church and Tradition also expressed the faith in God's almightiness while listing attributes of the Holy Trinity and particular Divine Persons (e.g. the Creed of pope Leon IX, decrees of the Fourth Council of the Lateran, of the Second Council of Lyon and of the Council of Florence) or making statements about the work of creation.¹³ On top of that the Catechism of the

bole (II – V wiek)" [The Content of the Tradition: the Rule of Faith and Symbols (II-V c.)], in Bernard SESBOÜÉ, Joseph WOLINSKI, *Bóg zbawienia*, vol. 1. *Tradycja, reguła i Symbole wiary. Ekonomia zbawienia. Rozwój dogmatów trynitarnych i chrystologicznych* [God of Salvation, vol. 1. Tradition, Rule and Symbols of Faith. The Economy of Salvation. The Development of Trinitarian and Christological Dogmas], trans. Piotr Rak (Kraków: Wydawnictwo "M", 1999), 95.

¹² *Breviarium fidei. Wybór doktrynalnych wypowiedzi Kościoła* [*Breviarium fidei. The Choice of Doctrinal Statements of the Church*], ed. Ignacy Bokwa (Poznań: Księgarnia św. Wojciecha, 2007) [further: BF], no. 1-20. Translations own.

¹³ The First Vatican Council in dogmatic constitution *Dei Filius* professed faith that: "This sole true God by His goodness and «omnipotent power», not to increase His own beatitude, and not to add to, but to manifest His perfection by the blessings...". BF, no. 639. English translation by Harmony Media Inc.

Catholic Church adds a description of God's almightiness as universal, loving and mysterious—meaning that God is the Creator and rules over everything, is the Father of humans which is only recognized by faith (CCC 268).

b) *Merciful God*

The Old Testament portrays God in His attributes of mercy. It is expressed by God's words and saving actions as well as the call of people longing for God's glance. People can turn to the Creator who shows mercy: "have mercy on me, o Lord" (Ps 4:2; 6:3; 9:14; 25:16); "his loyal love endures" (Ps 118:1c.2b.3b.4b).

At the same time God is portrayed as the defender of the oppressed, the poor, widows and orphans. Israel experienced God's mercy tangibly. Liberation of Israel from Egyptian captivity, journey through the desert and entry into the Promised Land show the power of God's love. It is an expression of God's loyalty—"I have also heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant" (Ex 6:5). The further history of Israel is a story of active love of God and His people— liberation from other enemies and care for the nation. This grace is especially visible in forgiveness. Multiple times God renounced His punishment because people asked for forgiveness. The evidence of this can be found in Jeremiah's prophecy: "...For as often as I speak against him, I do remember him still. Therefore my heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him" (Je 31:20). It is exemplified by following words: "I, the Lord, your God, am a jealous God, responding to the transgression of fathers by dealing with children to the third and fourth generations of those who reject me, and showing covenant faithfulness to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments" (Ex 20:5b-6). It is linked to the fact that for God man and his well-being is the most important. Thus, forgiveness surpasses the punishment. That is why the appeal for man's conversion is still actual—"The wicked need to abandon their lifestyle and sinful people their plans. They should return to the Lord, and he will show mercy to them, and to their God, for he will freely forgive them" (Is 55:7). The only obstacle is a hardened heart (Is 9:16; Jer 16:5.13).

Next verses of the Old Testament express tenderness and mercy of the Creator. Namely, God is compassionate (*raham*), gracious (*hanun*), slow to anger, abounding in grace and love (*hesed*) and faithfulness (*raham*), maintaining love to thousands (Ex 34:6), He will not carry out His fierce anger nor will He destroy his people (Ho 11:9); He is not angry forever (Jer 3:12); He is slow to anger, He is very gentle, He has compassion on the faithful,

He does not repay according to human sins (Ps 103:8-14). Furthermore, He is sovereign in showing His grace: "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" (Ex 33:19). Therefore, all who wait for Him in faith will be blessed (Is 30:18).

Mercy is not only focused on forgiveness but also allows difficult situations—similar to deserts—to happen. His aim is to speak to the hearts (Ho 2:16), so that a man can discover the need of a new life. Similarly: "He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wound" (Ho 6:1).

Also in the New Testament there is truth about merciful God is revealed. The very fact of the incarnation of the divine Word is an excellent display of His grace for Jesus came to the poor, ill and rejected and became their friend. His mission is expressed in those words: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour [...] Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk 4:18-19,20b). Even before Jesus was born, mercy was proclaimed—"His mercy extends to those who fear him [...] He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful" (Lk 1:50,54). Healings, which accompany Jesus' mission among the sinners, the oppressed and the rejected, were fulfilment of prophecies. The truth about the Promise of Emmanuel which will be among the people is not only a culmination of mercy but also God's almightiness. That is because people are given a totally new life.

The portrayal of merciful God is also expressed in apostolic letters in which we can find a phrase "Father of compassion" (2 Cor 1:3; Jm 5:11). They also express faith in such God (cf. 1 Cor 7:25; 2 Cor 4:1; 1 Tim 1:13) and show the promise of mercy to the faithful (cf. 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; Titus 1:4; 2 John 3). Above all, the New Testament consists of a testimony of faith that from grace we have been saved. This reality, rooted in Paschal Mystery of Jesus, is the deepest experience of merciful God because a man without any contribution but through turning to Jesus gains absolution and thus a new life.

c) *Divine Mercy*

Forgiveness is a constant motif in the Word of God. Prophecies of absolution of sins and of rebuilding of a man form a revelation of Divine Mercy.

Micah confessed: “Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry for ever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea?” (Micah 7:18–19). It can be said that Divine Mercy indirectly reveals the reality of evil and weakness in a man who needs an intervention from the Creator. Because of grace people can exist.¹⁴ This is also expressed in Jesus’ words to St. Faustina: “If I call creatures into being—that is the abyss of My mercy”.¹⁵

Merciful God also expects mercy from His people. That is why He condemned pagans without mercy (Amos 1:11), expected active love among people (Ex 22:26; Mic 6:8) expressed in helping others (cf. Is 58:6–11; Job 31:16–23), he forbade uncontrolled revenge and demanded a forgiving attitude. The special sign of mercy was the Sabbatical and the Jubilee year,¹⁶ when a person’s life was to recover to its original harmony.

Jesus also expected mercy from his disciples because God the Father was merciful (cf. Lk 6:36). The Good Samaritan is a quintessential example of such an attitude. He helped a Jew who was beaten by robbers (cf. Lk 10:30–37). The motif was taken up by the disciples. St. Paul tells about faith expressing itself through love (Gal 5:6), compassion (Php 2;1) and kindness (Eph 4:32). St. John acknowledges that mercy towards another man is a sign of experience of God’s love (1 John 3:17). What is more, St. James unequivocally points out that it is necessary to link faith with action (James 2:14–26). It needs to be said that, in this context, mercy is a test of authenticity of our faith. This is what qualifies people to eternal life (cf. Matt 25:31–46).

It needs to be noted that the gift of Holy Spirit is a particular indication of God’s almightiness and in the same time—of His mercy. The Holy Spirit makes a new person and through new people creates civilization of love—the new world.¹⁷

¹⁴ Bogusław WIDŁA, *Słownik antropologii Nowego Testamentu* [The Dictionary of Anthropology of the New Testament] (Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza “Vacatio”, 2003), 121.

¹⁵ Faustyna KOWALSKA, *Dzienniczek. Miłosierdzie Boże w duszy mojej* [The Diary. Divine Mercy in My Soul] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Księży Marianów, 2011⁶), no. 85. Translation by Congregation of Marians Stockbridge [further: CoMS].

¹⁶ On sabbatical and jubilee year cf. JOHN PAUL II, List apostolski [Apostolic Letter] *Tertio millennio adveniente* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Wrocławskiej Księgarni Archidiecezjalnej, 1994), no. 12. Translation by LEV.

¹⁷ Walerian SŁOMKA, “Miłosierdzie Boże” [*The Divine Mercy*], 522. Civilisation of love

2. THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON THE COHERENCE OF GOD'S MERCY AND ALMIGHTINESS

Seemingly opposite traits and realities are however tightly connected. To discover this unity, it is necessary to correctly understand mercy and almightiness and then observe their mutual conditioning and coexistence in single actions of God.

a) *God's Almightiness*

The phrase "God Almighty" was applied in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, first of all by Justin and in *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, and was the most popular in the fourth century. It was primarily used in the liturgical context, independently of the Creed—since in connection with the preface, referring to the Hebrew *Yahweh Sabaoth*.

It is also important to notice the impoverishment of the term "Almighty" by translating the Greek *Pantokratôr* to the Latin *omnipotens*. The first term expresses the active aspect—almightiness in terms of power, glory, authority, transcendence. The latter means only the ability to do everything and so does not emphasize as much of the active aspect. Whereas, the term "Father Almighty", as Joseph Ratzinger notes, "allows to unequivocally learn what the Christian image of God is: to see the tension between universal power and universal love, complete remoteness and complete closeness, between the absolute being and direct relation to what is most human."¹⁸

So, it is necessary to point to different scopes of the notion of almightiness: God's universal rule and power over all beings (the Sovereign of everything); ability to create everything and to sustain the existence of the world (the Lord, the Ruler, the Cause and the Principle of everything);¹⁹ ability

is a term applied by Paul VI and promoted by John Paul II. The Polish Pope, as a clarification and in addition to the phrase, used following descriptions: *Christian civilisation, new civilisation, work civilisation, new work civilisation, love and life civilisation, life civilisation, love and truth civilisation, civilisation of true justice and love*. Waldemar SEREMAK, "Cywilizacja miłości" [The Civilization of Love], in *Leksykon duchowości katolickiej* [The Lexicon of Catholic Spirituality], 155. One could risk saying that is the love civilisation that is a social fruit of personal mercy. It seems that without God's power the creation of a new world is not possible.

¹⁸ Joseph RATZINGER, *Wprowadzenie w chrześcijaństwo* [Introduction to Christianity], 137–138. Translation own.

¹⁹ "For to be the principle of all the things that are made is proper to the great omnipo-

to realize all possible states of being. The first two meanings are of particular importance for the biblical mentality, the second is connected to the logic of Greek's philosophy and the third was discovered by the medieval thought under the influence of St. Augustin²⁰ who defined almightiness as the ability of God to do whatever he pleases.²¹ Obviously it does not imply doing wrong as it would be illogical and it would be a display of weakness. To defend the thinking from such aberrations, Peter Lombard mentioned that His actions are just to defend St. Augustin's thought.²² Then, St. Thomas Aquinas pointed to the unwillfulness of God's almightiness: "But in God, power and essence, will and intellect, wisdom and justice, are one and the same. Whence, there can be nothing in the divine power which cannot also be in His just will or in His wise intellect".²³ So it is about what He justly wants and what excludes sin and evil.²⁴

tent God, as the Psalm (134:6) says, *Whatever the Lord wills he does, in heaven and on earth*". THOMAS AQUINAS, *Komentarz do Ewangelii Jana* [The Commentary on the Gospel of John], trans. Tadeusz Bartoś (Kęty: Wydawnictwo Antyk, 2002), nr 69. English translation by Dominican House of Studies [further: DHoS].

²⁰ Michał PALUCH, "Wprowadzenie do Kwestii I" [Introduction to Question I], in THOMAS AQUINAS, *Kwestie dyskutowane o mocy Boga*, vol. I. *O mocy Boga. O mocy rodzenia* [Questions discussed on the Power of God, vol. I. On the Power of God. On the Power of Giving Birth], ed. Mikołaj Olszewski, Michał Paluch, trans. Zbigniew Bomert et al. (Kęty: Wydawnictwo Marek Derewecki, Warszawa: Instytut Tomistyczny, 2008), 21.

²¹ *Who is almighty if not the one who can do everything?* AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, *O Trójcy Świętej* [On the Trinity], IV, 27 (Poznań–Warszawa–Lublin: Księgarnia św. Wojciecha, 1962), 202.

²² M. PALUCH, "Wprowadzenie do Kwestii I" [Introduction to Question I], 23.

²³ THOMAS AQUINAS, *Suma teologiczna* [Sum of Theology], t. 2, q. 25, art. 5, ad. 1, trans. Pius Bełch (Londyn: Katolicki Ośrodek Wydawniczy "Veritas", 1975), 228. Translation by Fathers of the English Dominican Province [further: EDP]. Self-contradictory and so not subject to almightiness would be: "creation of nothing, God's self-destruction, creation of a thing more powerful than the creator, and what had not been disqualified by eternal decrees of God's will such as a sorrow for creation of man [...], destruction of human soul, cancellation of human salvation in Jesus Christ". Czesław S. BARTNIK, *Dogmatyka katolicka* [Catholic Dogmatics] (Lublin: RW KUL, 2000), 135. Translation own. It is also worth remembering that God's nature cannot contain "any element of passive possibility which is an acceptance of perfection from outside. [...] God is almighty which means that he can do everything what he pleases. The only limitation is an absurd: so he cannot change moral laws, create a square circle, cancel already real things and events". Stanisław KOWALCZYK, *Wieki o Bogu. Od presokratyków do teologii procesu* [Centuries about God. From Presocratics to Process Theology] (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Wrocławskiej Księgarni Archidiecezjalnej, 1986), 154–155. Translation own. Cf. Wincenty GRANAT, *Bóg Jeden z Trójcy Osób* [Sole God of the Three Holy Persons] (Lublin: TN KUL, 1962), 262–265.

²⁴ AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, *Kazanie do katechumenów o wyznaniu wiary* [Sermon to Catechumens on the Creed], in id. *Pisma katechetyczne*, trans. Władysław Budzik (Warszawa:

The almightiness cannot be separated from the whole revelation of God; considerations about *aseitas* will not be complete as the philosophical discourse alone leads to the declaration of God's unrecognisability. Therefore professing God Almighty implies seeing that He has everything, differs from all of weaknesses and transcends all of powers. It is not the *potentia* that is important here, but the *potestas*—the legitimate justification of power which is tightly connected with the love and order of God.²⁵ Thus, consideration of almightiness only in relation to what is not divine is inappropriate. It is necessary to emphasize that "linking God's almightiness with the dynamics of nature is more appropriate. [...] [it] means that nature does not have any essential goals other than that fixed by God."²⁶

Father's almightiness appeared first of all in the Incarnation of the Word and in the Christ's salvific work through Father's power who manifested "great power for us who believe" (Eph 1,19). This is a particular justification for perceiving God as the Father of Christians. Tertullian, Cyprian and Origen thought that the baptised were able to call God their Father par excellence. It has an authentic meaning as "eternal God and time-bound human interpenetrate in one and only Person and what occurs is the final concretization of God's power over the time".²⁷ It does not realize in any, even potential, tyranny but in the development of Salvation History—time made reasonable. That way God's power does not limit human freedom.²⁸ Origen expressed it directly: "God would not be called Almighty if there would not exist things under his power."²⁹

Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1952), 62. "For wrong things cannot be done by God as He cannot even want to do them. [...] Good things however can be done and wanted by God, although because of His forethought, or rather Providence, never or seldom does He do some of them." Piotr DAMIANI, *O wszechmocy Bożej* [On Divine Omnipotence], trans. Ida Radziejowska (Kęty: Wydawnictwo Marek Derewiecki, 2008), 43. Translation own.

²⁵ Karl BARTH, *Dogmatyka w zarysie* [Dogmatics in outline], trans. Ivonna Nowicka (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe "Semper", 1994), 43–47.

²⁶ Harald WAGNER, *Dogmatyka* [Dogmatics], trans. Juliusz Zychowicz (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2007), 346.

²⁷ J. RATZINGER, *Wprowadzenie w chrześcijaństwo* [Introduction to Christianity], 312. Translation own.

²⁸ J.-P. BATUT, *Bóg Ojciec* [God the Father], 45, 50. Translation own.

²⁹ ORIGEN, *O zasadach* [On the Principles], trans. Stanisław Kalinkowski (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 1996), 75. Translation own. Father "is called Almighty as he can do everything and he rules over all powers." VENANTIUS FORTUNATUS, "Objaśnienie Symbolu" [The Explanation of the Symbol], in *Symbol apostołski w nauczaniu Ojców* [The Apostolic Symbol in the Teachings of the Fathers], trans. Ludwik Gładyszewski (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2010), 185. Translation own.

Therefore God's almightiness does not limit human dignity nor freedom. Quite the opposite, it guards human life and it constitutes a basis for the rise from sin as it is all about love "more powerful than death – more powerful than sin."³⁰ This is the essence of almightiness—the Infinite is able to hear the finite—God is able to hear a human.³¹ Thus, "God seems to be the prisoner of His own eternal law resolved before all ages."³²

b) *God's Mercy*

Mercy is the greatest attribute of God;³³ it results from His perfection – "Mercy is especially to be attributed to God, as seen in its effect, but not as an affection of passion."³⁴ Mercy is an action of God towards the creation and means gradual bestowing of perfections, "in so far as perfections given to things by God expel defects."³⁵

A big contribution to the understanding of the divine mercy was made with the *Diary* by St. Faustina. It is shown in the biblical meaning—functionally. It means that "first of all, the signs and results of God's infinite and eternal love in the history of the world—primarily in human salvation history."³⁶ That is why it is necessary to see God's mercy as the greatest of His attributes.

Mercy understood in that way has nothing to do with spiritual anarchy. "It does not cancel God's justice as it is the only thing that makes a sinner righteous in front of God and so God simultaneously honours His mercy and

³⁰ JOHN PAUL II, Encyklika [Encyclical] *Dives in misericordia*, no. 8. Translation by LEV.

³¹ "[...] the greatness of true God should be seen exactly in the fact that even the least thing is not too little for Him and that even the greatest thing is not too big for Him." J. RATZINGER, *Wprowadzenie w chrześcijaństwo* [Introduction to Christianity], 310. Translation own.

³² *Ibid.*, 311.

³³ F. KOWALSKA, *Dzienniczek* [The Diary], no. 949.

³⁴ THOMAS AQUINAS, *Suma teologiczna* [Sum of Theology], t. 2, q. 21, art. 3, 173.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, "The advantage of mercy over justice is especially visible in relation to rational creature, that is man. His rationale is that the title of Father and friend is added to the title of Creator and Lord. This is the exact source of the unlimited mercy which we will never cease to worship". Jacek WORONIECKI, *Tajemnica Miłosierdzia Bożego. Nauka chrześcijańska o miłosierdziu Bożym i o naszej wobec niego postawie* [The Mystery of The Divine Mercy. The Christian Study on the Mercy of God and on Our Attitude Towards Him] (Kraków: Księgarnia Krakowska, 1948²), 77. Translation own.

³⁶ Ignacy RÓŻYCKI, *Miłosierdzie Boże. Zasadnicze rysy nabożeństwa do Miłosierdzia Bożego* [The Divine Mercy. The Essential Features of Devotion to the Divine Mercy] (Kraków: Zgromadzenie Sióstr Miłosierdzia, 1982), 10. Translation own.

His justice.”³⁷ Therefore a particular expression of the merciful God’s almightiness is the absolution of sins. “This forgiving of sins is a fitting effect of the Holy Spirit. [...] Now it is only through love that sins are forgiven for “Love covers all offenses”, (Prov 10:12); “Love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Pet 4:8).³⁸ Hence the way of eternal salvation, that frees one from the slavery of sin, is opened for humans.³⁹ So that is how big importance does the Sacrament of Penance have “[...] since it is a sacrament of the New Law, gives grace, as does Baptism.”⁴⁰ God draws good in a man from the present evil;⁴¹ sin as an imperfection need not have the final say in the life of a man – “mercy [...] appears to be the power of God who can act in the way that does not give the final say even to the creature’s sin and its results as He always finds another way to draw good from it.”⁴² That is why God’s mercy has to be seen as an active reality that exists “in God as an expression of His will in creation of good and in removal of flaws.”⁴³

c) *Coexistence of almightiness and mercy*

The unity of almightiness and mercy is expressed by the first sentence of the Creed—“I believe in God, the Father almighty”. This expression cannot be understood only as a proclamation of divinity and its attributes as it shows God’s nature itself. St. Augustine explained it writing that “there is God and

³⁷ Karl RAHNER and Herbert VORGRIMLER, *Mały słownik teologiczny* [The Small Theological Dictionary], trans. Tadeusz Mieszkowski, Paweł Pachciarek (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1996), 279. Translation own.

³⁸ THOMAS AQUINAS, *Komentarz do Ewangelii Jana* [The Commentary on the Gospel of John], no. 2541. Translation by DHoS.

³⁹ JOHN PAUL II, List apostolski [Apostolic Letter] *Misericordia Dei* (Katowice: Drukarnia Archidiecezjalna, 2002), 3.

⁴⁰ THOMAS AQUINAS, *Komentarz do Ewangelii Jana* [The Commentary on the Gospel of John], no. 2542. Translation by DHoS.

⁴¹ JOHN PAUL II, Encyklical *Dives in misericordia*, no. 6.

⁴² Paolo MARTINELLI, *Milosierna miłość a ojcostwo Boga* [Merciful Love and the Fatherhood of God], in *Tajemnica Trójcy Świętej* [The Mystery of the Holy Trinity], trans. Lucjan Balter, “Kolekcja Communio” [“Collection Communio”] 13 (Poznań: Pallottinum, 2000), 90. Translation own. “...God’s infinite mercy is inexhaustible: even the greatest sins, not only of one man, but of the whole world will never exhaust it nor will they ever compare to it. Human and divine mercy of Jesus’ Heart is as well inexhaustible as in the 56th revelation Jesus says about it *it grows through the fact of being active*.” I. RÓŻYCKI, *Miłosierdzie Boże* [The Divine Mercy], 13. Translation own.

⁴³ Wincenty GRANAT, *Teodycea. Istnienie Boga i jego natura* [Theodicy. The Existence of God and His Nature] (Lublin: TN KUL, 1968), 423–424. Translation own.

there is Father. God through His power, Father through His goodness. How happy are we that we find God our Father! Thus we believe in Him and we promise to ourselves everything by His mercy as He is almighty.”⁴⁴

The basis of this should be seen in the sentence “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8b). This name reveals the truth about the relation of God and man. It is love that expresses God’s almightiness most profoundly for the Creator does not destroy the sinners, but calls them to reconciliation, to conversion and to changing of their lives. It is giving the Son up that makes it possible. The time which is given will however pass and the universal Kingdom of God will come. Thus “love will finally triumph and reveal itself in the full might. Almighty love will triumph.”⁴⁵ Jesus confirmed this while speaking to St. Faustina in the context of the grace of salvation: “My omnipotent mercy is active here. Happy the soul that takes advantage of this grace.”⁴⁶

So it is necessary to say that it is yet the revelation of Jesus Christ that opens the possibility of the deep coexistence and interdependence of God’s almightiness and mercy. This mystery of Bethlehem and Golgotha reveals God’s power with the full depth of its meaning.⁴⁷ Joseph Ratzinger conveyed this in his writings: “here a new understanding of power is also born, a new understanding of reign and greatness. The greatest power may calmly become a subject of other power. Its power is not based on violence, it is the freedom of love that will always be stronger than earth-dominating violence, even if rejected.”⁴⁸ At the same time it is necessary to note that God showed his almightiness in a way that man did not expect—as frailty of

⁴⁴ *Kazanie II na przekazanie symbolu* [Sermon II for the Transfer of the Symbol], in *Symbol apostołski w nauczaniu Ojców* [The Apostles’ Creed in the Teachings of the Fathers], trans. Ludwik Gładyszewski (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2010), 76–77. Translation own. “He is almighty and he can do greater and lesser things [...], great both in great and small works.” Ibid., 79. “...all of His omnipotent mercy was enveloping me.” F. KOWALSKA, *Dzienniczek* [The Diary], no. 1108. Translation by CoMS.

⁴⁵ The Theological–Historical Commission for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, *Bóg, Ojciec miłosierdzia* [God the Father of Mercy], 107–108. Translation own.

⁴⁶ F. KOWALSKA, *Dzienniczek* [The Diary], no. 1486. Translation by CoMS.

⁴⁷ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical *Dives in misericordia*, no. 2. 7–8.

⁴⁸ J. RATZINGER, *Wprowadzenie w chrześcijaństwo* [Introduction to Christianity], 138. Translation own. “Since God is love, He can suffer and in that way reveal His divinity. Therefore God’s self-destruction on the Cross does not mean His undivinization, yet His eschatological glorification. [...] Sympathetic God who reveals Himself in Jesus Christ is the final answer to the problem of theodicy, on which both theism and atheism break.” WALTER KASPER, *Bóg Jezusa Chrystusa* [The God of Jesus Christ], trans. Jan Tyrawa (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Wrocławskiej Księgarni Archidiecezjalnej, 1996), 247. Translation own.

human existence burdened with the consequences of sin. This is the paradox of the merciful almightiness—what diverts one from God, becomes a way towards Him; however, transformed by the faithfulness of Jesus' love, it loses the deadly effects and the ultimate meaning. It is expressed in Hans Urs von Balthasar's words: "Hence it can be said that the merciful self-giving up by God in His Son shows the extreme aspect of God's mercy which can be equated directly to the final embrace, somehow a grasp from below."⁴⁹ Almightiness is therefore expressed most fully in God's ability to sacrifice Himself, that is in love embracing "thinking oneself, speaking oneself, expressing oneself."⁵⁰ It is far from the purely philosophical description of God's being.

God is not only above the world, not only saint, all-knowing and almighty but He is first of all merciful. His mercy is the greatest attribute of His power – "Further, it is said of God that He manifests His omnipotence «especially by sparing and having mercy». Therefore the greatest act possible to the divine power is to spare and have mercy."⁵¹ It is also the greatest display of gratuitousness coming from God's love and power. At the same time it actualizes the Creator's fatherhood of people.⁵²

This aspect of the link between almightiness and mercy is celebrated by the Church during liturgy. The collect for the 26th Sunday of Ordinary Time reads: "O God, who manifest your almighty power above all by pardoning and showing mercy...." This is where the most crucial aspect of God's power is visible. St. Thomas of Aquinas formulated this truth by saying that "God's

⁴⁹ P. MARTINELLI, *Milosierna miłość* [Merciful Love], 96. Translation own. "God is Love that puts all of its own almightiness at risk for overcoming of evil. This is the only and effective way of disposing its mercilessness." Jerzy SZYMIK, "Traktat o Bogu Jedynym" [The Treatise on the Sole God], in *Dogmatyka*, vol. 3 [Dogmatics, vol. 3], ed. Elżbieta Adamiak, Andrzej Czaja, Józef Majewski (Warszawa: Towarzystwo "Więź", 2006), 165. Translation own.

⁵⁰ Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, *Credo. Medytacje o Składzie Apostolskim* [Credo: Meditations on the Apostles' Creed], trans. Jan Daniel Szczurek (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 1997), 22–23. Translation own.

⁵¹ THOMAS AQUINAS, *Suma teologiczna* [Sum of Theology], t. 2, q. 25, art. 3. English translation by EDP.

⁵² G. BAGNARD, *Bóg Ojciec* [God the Father], 13. Consequently man should all the time actualize his own filiation. "...God Himself defines the existence of creatures and confers them with the task of acknowledging that they are dependent on Him. What *Other-in-God* (Son) experiences eternally, without any transition from lesser to greater, *Other-than-God* (man) should experience, as was well understood by St. Irenaeus, in constant growth that will one day let him to make Paschal sacrifice of his own life, for the fulfilment of his own filiation." J.-P. BATUT, *Bóg Ojciec* [God the Father], 46. Translation own.

omnipotence is particularly shown in sparing and having mercy, because in this is it made manifest that God has supreme power, that He freely forgives sins. For it is not for one who is bound by laws of a superior to forgive sins of his own free will. Or, because by sparing and having mercy upon men, He leads them on to the participation of an infinite good; which is the ultimate effect of the divine power. Or because [...] the effect of the divine mercy is the foundation of all the divine works.”⁵³

Other liturgical texts express, directly or indirectly, the truth about conjugation of mercy and almightiness. The collect for Thursday of the First Week of Advent includes the following prayer: “Stir up your power, O Lord, and come to our help with mighty strength, that what our sins impede the grace of your mercy may hasten.” Furthermore, liturgy expresses the almightiness of God in the work of new creation. It is possible to list the following prayers: “Accept the sacrificial offerings”, “O Lord, by which, in your power and kindness, you willed us to be reconciled to yourself and our salvation to be restored” (prayer over the offerings for Friday of the first week of Lent); “Lord, we pray, that this saving sacrifice may cleanse us of our faults and become an oblation pleasing to your almighty power” (prayer over the offerings for Tuesday of the third week of Lent); “Be near, O Lord, to those who plead before you, and look kindly on those who place their hope in your mercy, that [...] they may persevere in holy living...” (collect for Thursday of the fifth week of Lent); “Almighty ever-living God, who have restored us to life [...], preserve in us the work of your mercy...” (prayer after Communion for Good Friday); “O God, protector of those who hope in you, without whom nothing has firm foundation, nothing is holy, bestow in abundance your mercy upon us” (collect for 17th Sunday of Ordinary Time); “Almighty ever-living God, who in the abundance of your kindness surpass the merits and the desires of those who entreat you, pour out your mercy upon us...” (collect for 27 Sunday of Ordinary Time). Prefaces of the Lent however contain an invocation to the “holy Father, almighty and eternal God.” Also the simultaneous listing of the aforementioned attributes of God (“almighty and merciful God”) shows their coexistence (collect for the second Sunday of Advent; prefaces for Sundays of Ordinary Time).

Foregoing prayers are justified as God’s almightiness manifests itself in judgement and salvation which is accompanied by love. Actually it is love

⁵³ THOMAS AQUINAS, *Suma teologiczna* [Sum of Theology], t. 2, q. 25, art. 3. Translation by EDP.

that is the peak of almightiness since it may always be active. In every situation it is possible for God to introduce the reign of love which realizes itself in the change of the world. Only such love creates authentic hope in a man.⁵⁴ Service of forgiveness for sins is therefore God's presence. He does not agree on human misery and on suffering of particular men. God's intervention in life of a repentant sinner results in him becoming a new creature. God does not allow a baptised who turns his back on Him to perish. Such a man can be saved as long he chooses it (cf. Jn 3:16).

This is the case due to Christ's paschal triumph which overcomes the injustice of sin leading to death. That is how man was justified by God. St. Thomas of Aquinas expressed this issue in the following words: "That man should be delivered by Christ's Passion was in keeping with both His mercy and His justice. With His justice, because by His Passion Christ made satisfaction for the sin of the human race; and so man was set free by Christ's justice: and with His mercy, for [...] God gave him His Son to satisfy for him."⁵⁵ This way of salvation and justification cannot be seen as a necessity, but as the greatest sign of mercy. As Bernard Sesboüé notes, "it is the matter of God's intention, more appropriate for many reasons, among of which the first is the fact that man better knows how God loves him."⁵⁶ At the same time the deepest sense of human freedom is revealed in juxtaposition to the vanity of sin and to the abundance of God's kindness.

⁵⁴ The German Bishops' Conference, *Katolicki katechizm dorosłych* [Adult Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church], 64.

⁵⁵ THOMAS AQUINAS, *Suma teologiczna* [Sum of Theology], t. 26, q. 46, art. 1, ad. 3. Translation by EDP.

⁵⁶ Bernard SESBOÜÉ, "W nurcie Chalcedonu: chrystologia i soteriologia od VI wieku" [In the Currents of Chalcedon: Christology and Soteriology from VI century], in Bernard SESBOÜÉ, Joseph WOLINSKI, *Bóg zbawienia*, vol. I. *Tradycja, reguła i Symbole wiary. Ekonomia zbawienia. Rozwój dogmatów trynitarnych i chrystologicznych* [God of Salvation, vol. I. Tradition, Rule and Symbols of Faith. The Economy of Salvation. The Development of Trinitarian and Christological Dogmas], 434. Translation own.

3. ALMIGHTINESS AND MERCY OF GOD IN SPIRITUAL LIFE AND CHURCH PRACTICE

The truth about almightiness and mercy of God needs to be acknowledged not only in the act of faith by the baptised but also to be celebrated in devotion and practised in human relations.

a) *Trust in God's mercy*

First duty is to believe in the Word of God which announces the truth about God's mercy. Cognition and experience of almighty grace of Lord builds a man and opens them for bigger and bigger signs and what is more important: gives eternal life. It is expressed by The Act of Entrustment of the Destiny of the World to the Divine Mercy, made by John Paul II on August 17, 2002 in Cracow: "O God, merciful Father, [...]. Bend down to us sinners, heal our weaknesses, conquer all evil, and grant that all the inhabitants of the earth may experience Your mercy."⁵⁷ Expected radical change is rooted in God's actions which triumph over human weakness and evil. This is the experience of saints and many of the faithful who gave their life to God's mercy. It proves the efficiency of almightiness and God's active love.

b) *Forgiveness of sins and the temporal punishment*

One of basic dimensions of Jesus' and Church's mission is absolution of sins. Wonderfulness of this fact is portrayed by healing of the paralytic: "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven. [...] I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. So he said to the paralysed man, «Get up, take your mat and go home»" (Mt 9:2b.6). During the absolution, connected with the act of contrition and the gift of God's grace, the spiritual situation of a Christian is subject to change.

Another sign, connected with the Power of Keys is indulgence, that involves the faithful both deceased and alive, in which "the fullness of the Father's mercy, who offers everyone his love, expressed primarily in the forgiveness of sins"⁵⁸ is revealed. It is in that gift that "the Father who,

⁵⁷ <http://www.milosierdzieboze.pl/akt.php> (1.12.2015). Translation after <http://www.faus-tina-message.com/act-entrustment-divine-mercy.htm> (15.01.2016).

⁵⁸ JOHN PAUL II, Papal Bull *Incarnationis misterium* (Poznań: Pallottinum, 1999), 9. Translation by LEV. "Hence we must say on the contrary that indulgences hold good both in

through the Bride of Christ, his Church, reaches the pardoned sinner and frees him from every residue left by the consequences of sin, enabling him to act with charity, to grow in love rather than to fall back into sin.”⁵⁹ This way God “draws good from all the forms of evil” that exist in a man and in the world.⁶⁰ Here, the main point “is bringing of God’s mercy and already accomplished reconciliation with the Church to the point of showing their effectiveness in the pluralism and intricacy of the finite, existential, social and natural dimensions of human existence.”⁶¹

Indulgence is therefore an experience of God’s mercy and almightiness. It can be seen in the effects of zealous conversion leading to the purification of a faithful.⁶² Its goal is multiplication of love and repentance among the faithful. Among the deceased – it is a gift of a new life through the intercession of the living. So, analysing the reality of the plenary indulgence, conditioned by perfect contrition and full independence from even a smallest sin, it is possible to spot the analogy to the baptism of an adult whose guilts are forgiven and whose punishments are remitted. It demands God’s radical intervention.

c) *Jubilee year*

Every jubilee year is an expression of faith in God’s mercy and almightiness. John Paul II explained “the Jubilee is precisely this ‘year of the Lord’s

the Church’s court and in the judgment of God, for the remission of the punishment which remains after contrition, absolution, and confession, whether this punishment be enjoined or not. The reason why they so avail is the oneness of the mystical body in which many have performed works of satisfaction exceeding the requirements of their debts; in which, too, many have patiently borne unjust tribulations whereby a multitude of punishments would have been paid, had they been incurred. So great is the quantity of such merits that it exceeds the entire debt of punishment due to those who are living at this moment: and this is especially due to the merits of Christ: for though He acts through the sacraments, yet His efficacy is nowise restricted to them, but infinitely surpasses their efficacy.” THOMAS AQUINAS, *Suma teologiczna* [Sum of Theology], vol. 30, 203–204. Translation by EDP. For a valuable study on indulgences in context of history, theology and ecumenism cf. Bertrand de MARGERIE, *Tajemnica odpustów* [Secret of Indulgences], trans. Katarzyna Dybeł (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2008).

⁵⁹ FRANCIS, Papal Bull *Misericordiae vultus*, no. 22. Translation by LEV.

⁶⁰ JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical *Dives in misericordia*, no. 6. Translation by LEV.

⁶¹ Gerhard Ludwig MÜLLER, *Dogmatyka katolicka* [Catholic Dogmatics], trans. Wiesław Szymona (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2015), 745. Translation own.

⁶² Cf. CCC 1472. As Clement VI noted in Papal Bull *Unigenitus Dei Filius*, indulgences are “...to be given to those truly repentant and confessing graciously, for pious and practical reasons, remitting temporal punishment for sins”. BF, no. 267.

favour', a year of the remission of sins and of the punishments due to them, a year of reconciliation between disputing parties, a year of manifold conversions and of sacramental and extra-sacramental penance."⁶³ That way justice is outweighed by mercy, for God's greatness is that it constantly gives a chance for conversion, repentance and forgiveness of sins. It will not happen disregarding human will. Every jubilee year is however connected to particular gifts which provides an opportunity to renew one's life.

Additional, it is necessary to note that a jubilee year is a clear sign to whole humanity to discover the greatness of and need for mercy. That is why Francis calls the Church to evangelize: "May the message of mercy reach everyone, and may no one be indifferent to the call to experience mercy. I direct this invitation to conversion even more fervently to those whose behaviour distances them from the grace of God."⁶⁴ It must not be an unusual call. Mercy should characterize every day as God's grace is constantly extended over the world.⁶⁵

d) *Active mercy*

Experience of God's grace draws man to show mercy to others. Christian mercy is "in a certain sense the most perfect incarnation of *equality* between people, and therefore also the most perfect incarnation of justice as well [...]. Thus, mercy becomes an indispensable element for shaping mutual relationships between people, in a spirit of deepest respect for what is human, and in a spirit of mutual brotherhood."⁶⁶ That is why undertaking works of mercy is essential which was aptly grasped by the Second Vatican Council: "man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself."⁶⁷ In this view, experience of God's almighty mercy implies that men perform works of mercy for one another. Its measure is not the strength of the emotion but a specific action towards those in need. It is caused by the experience of

⁶³ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Tertio millennio adveniente*, no. 14. Translation by LEV.

⁶⁴ FRANCIS, Papal Bull *Misericordiae vultus*, no. 19. Translation by LEV.

⁶⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 25.

⁶⁶ JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical *Dives in misericordia*, no. 14. Translation by LEV.

⁶⁷ Vatican Council II, "Konstytucja duszpasterska o Kościele w świecie współczesnym *Gaudium et spes*" [*Gaudium et spes. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*], no. 24, in *Konstytucje. Dekrety. Deklaracje* [*Constitutions. Decrees. Declarations*] (Poznań: Pallottinum, 2002), 543–544. Translation by LEV.

transformative and healing grace. Forgiveness, which creates a new reality between men, is its peak.

In this context Pope Francis called the Church to the world-transforming mercy. He motivates the faithful pointing to the fact that "Mercy is the very foundation of the Church's life. [...] The Church's very credibility is seen in how she shows merciful and compassionate love."⁶⁸

4. CONCLUSIONS

The foregoing discourse can be summarized in few points:

a) Peter Damian wrote about God's almightiness: "the greatest and almighty Creator's will is such an effective cause of existence or nonexistence of all things that if He wants something to exist then it is not possible for the thing not to exist; whereas if He does not want a thing to exist then it is not possible for the thing to exist."⁶⁹ Then, Revelation shows that God's will is to forgive. For that reason, the greatest sign of God's almightiness, which form the vanity of sin recovers man to life and eternal life, can be seen in mercy.

b) Almightiness does not only mean great actions and extraordinary phenomena. It can be asked: "Why wonder that almighty God reveals Himself as great in great things and in the same time so wonderfully works in everything what is the smallest and the least."⁷⁰

c) God's action is always linked with love toward man. Thus in God love is always connected with mercy⁷¹ which includes words and salvific actions. It needs to be mentioned that "love is transformed into mercy when it has to go beyond the precise norm of justice – precise and often too narrow."⁷²

d) St. Augustine confesses that: "God is almighty and being merciful does not stop Him from being just and this does not stop him from being merci-

⁶⁸ FRANCIS, Papal Bull *Misericordiae vultus*, no. 10. Translation by LEV.

⁶⁹ P. DAMIANI, *O wszechmoc Bożej* [On Divine Omnipotence], 73. Translation own.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 89.

⁷¹ JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical *Dives in misericordia*, no. 3.

⁷² Ibid., 5. Translation own.

ful.”⁷³ That is why it is important to see the coexistence of all God’s attributes. It comes from the divine nature.

e) The whole Church is called to give a brave witness of God’s almightiness, love and mercy. Then, this proclamation may touch every man and change their life. It is possible when the faithful accept mercy of almighty God, contemplate His presence and then they want to follow the commandment of Gospel: “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful” (Lk 6:36).⁷⁴

f) Divine Mercy is the greatest sign of God’s almightiness. St. Faustina’s words are worth quoting: “All the attributes of God, such as omnipotence and wisdom, serve to reveal to us the greatest of His attributes.”⁷⁵

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⁷³ *Miłosierdzie. Mądrość Ojców Kościoła* [Mercy. The Wisdom of the Fathers of the Church], ed. Dariusz Piórkowski (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2015), 14. Translation own.

⁷⁴ Cf. FRANCIS, Papal Bull *Misericordiae vultus*, 12–13.

⁷⁵ F. KOWALSKA, *Dzienniczek* [The Diary], no. 458. Translation by CoMS.

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MIŁOSIERDZIE BOŻE PRZEJAWEM WSZECHMOCY BOGA

S t r e s z c z e n i e

W doktrynie chrześcijańskiej szczególne miejsce i znaczenie ma miłosierdzie. Jest ono powiązane z wszechmocą Boga. Wobec tego miłosierdzie to nie wyraz słabości czy bezradności, ale przejaw czynnej, twórczej, aktywnej miłości Bożej.

Bóg jest wszechmogący, czyni to, co zechce, zgodnie z prawdą i sprawiedliwością, wszystkim rządzi według swojej woli i nic nie jest niemożliwe dla Niego. Największym jednak przejawem tej wszechmocy jest przebaczenie, które dotyka głębi serca grzesznika. Dlatego wszechmoc Boga nie ogranicza więc w żaden sposób godności człowieka i jego wolności, ale zabezpiecza ona jego życie, stanowi podstawę dla powstania człowieka z grzechu poprzez dar łaski.

Wyznaczają to właściwie ustawioną duchowość chrześcijańską: osobiste doświadczenie miłosierdzia, przebaczenie grzechów i przebaczenie ludziom, przyjmowanie daru odpustów oraz lat jubileuszowych. Wielkie znaczenie ma też czynienie miłosierdzia na wzór Boga.

Słowa kluczowe: miłosierdzie; wszechmoc Boga; odpusty; duchowość miłosierdzia.